CLAIMS

1   1. A first-support computer system of a first support vendor
2   comprising:
3   an interface for:
4   receiving first diagnostic data from a customer computer
5   system of a customer,
6   transmitting second diagnostic data to a second-support
7   computer system of a second-support vendor, and
8   transmitting notifications to said customer; and
9   an analysis module for
10   analyzing said first diagnostic data to determine whether a
11   proposed solution should be generated *a)* with or *b)*
12   without a response from said second computer system,
13   if *a*, making available to said customer a first-sole proposed
14   solution without a response from said second computer
15   system, and
16   if b, transmitting at least some of said diagnostic data to said
17   second computer system and, once a response is received
18   from said second computer system, making available to
19   said customer a first-joint proposed solution that is a
20   function of said response.

1   2. A system as recited in Claim 1 further comprising a World-
2   Wide Web server having an address, said analysis module making
3   said first-sole or said first-joint proposed solution available at said
4   World-Wide Web server, said interface transmitting a notification to
5   said customer indicating said address.

1   3. A system as recited in Claim 1 wherein said interface includes
2   an e-mail module for e-mailing said notification to said customer.

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1   4. A system as recited in Claim 1wherein said analysis module
2   includes a knowledge base relating computer problems and
3   solutions.

1   5. A system as recited in Claim 1 further comprising an
2   entitlement module for checking identification information received
3   with said first diagnostic data for providing an entitlement
4   determination whether or not said customer is entitled to said first-
5   sole or said first-joint proposed solution, said entitlement module
6   being coupled to said analysis module for receiving said
7   information therefrom and for providing said entitlement
8   determination thereto, said entitlement module, if said entitlement
9   determination is negative, making available to said customer an
10   entitlement procedure and then providing an affirmative indication
11   to said analysis module if and when said customer implements said
12   procedure;
13   said analysis module providing for, upon receiving an affirmative
14   entitlement indication, making said first-sole or said first-joint
15   proposed solution available to said customer.

1   6. A method comprising:

2   receiving, from a customer computer system of a customer, first
3   diagnostic data associated with a problem on said customer
4   computer system;

5   determining from said first diagnostic data whether a proposed
6   solution should be generated *a)* with or *b)* without a response from
7   a second computer system of a second support vendor;

8   if *a*, making available to said customer a first-sole proposed
9   solution without a response from said second computer system; and

10   if b, transmitting at least some of said diagnostic data to said
11   second computer system and, once a response is received from said
12   second computer system, making available to said customer a first-
13   joint proposed solution that is a function of said response.

1   7. A method as recited in Claim 6 wherein said first-sole or said
2   first-joint proposed solution is made available at an Internet
3   address and said customer is notified of said Internet address.

1   8. A method as recited in Claim 6 further comprising running on
2   said customer computer system a diagnostic-data gathering
3   program for generating said first diagnostic data.

9. A method as recited in Claim 6 further comprising checking identification information received with said first diagnostic data to determine whether or not said customer is entitled to said first-sole or said first-joint proposed solution, and

if so, making said first-sole or said first-joint proposed solution available to said customer, and

if not, making available to said customer an entitlement procedure and then making said first-sole or said first-joint proposed solution available to said customer if and when said entitlement procedure is implemented.

10. A method as recited in Claim 6 further comprising:

transferring second diagnostic data from said customer computer system to said second computer system;

analyzing, using said second computer system, said second diagnostic data so as to generate a second proposed solution; and

making said second proposed solution available to said customer.

1   11. A program set embodied in computer readable media, said
2 program set comprising:
3   an analysis module for
4   receiving, from a customer computer system of a customer,
5   first diagnostic data associated with a problem on said
6   customer computer system;
7   determining from said first diagnostic data whether a
8   proposed solution should be generated *a)* with or *b)*
9   without a response from a second computer system of a
10   second support vendor;
11   if *a*, making available to said customer a first-sole proposed
12   solution without a response from said second computer
13   system; and
14   if b, transmitting at least some of said diagnostic data to said
15   second computer system and, once a response is received
16   from said second computer system, making available to
17   said customer a first-joint proposed solution that is a
18   function of said response.

1   12. A program set as recited in Claim 11 further comprising an
2 interface module including a web-page generator for presenting said
3 first-solo or said first-joint proposed solution at an Internet
4 address, said interface module also including means for notifying
5 said customer of said address, said interface module being coupled
6 to said analysis module for providing said first diagnostic data
7 thereto and receiving said first-solo or said first-joint proposed
8 solution therefrom.

13. A program set as recited in Claim 11 further comprising an entitlement program for checking identification information received with said first diagnostic data to determine whether or not said customer is entitled to said first-sole or said first-joint proposed solution, and

if not, making available to said customer an entitlement procedure which, if and when implemented, would make said customer entitled to said first-sole or said first-joint proposed solution, said entitlement program notifying said analysis program when said customer is so entitled, said analysis program providing for, upon being notified that said customer is so entitled, making said first-sole or said first-joint proposed solution available to said customer.

14. A program set as recited in Claim 11 further comprising running on said customer computer system a diagnostic data program a diagnostic-data gathering program for generating said first diagnostic data.

15. A program set as recited in Claim 11 further comprising:

a second analysis program running on said second-support computer system, said second analysis program providing for receiving said at least some of said diagnostic data and providing said response as a function thereof.